



THE ADVOCATE

March 2014

Medicare QI Program: Protect Low Income Seniors

The Medicare Qualifying Individual Program low income subsidy is the only Medicare assistance program that expires every year unless the U.S. Congress moves to extend it.

This program enables about 500,000 low income Medicare beneficiaries nationwide to visit their doctor's office by assisting with their Medicare Part B premiums. Individuals that qualify for this program have individual incomes at or below \$1,333 per month, or \$1,790 per couple. The program covers the Medicare Part B premium of \$104.90 otherwise deducted from the recipients Social Security check each month. If this program were to end, low income seniors and adults with disabilities would be required to paying an additional 8-11% of their total monthly income for health care, or go without access to their primary care physicians.

As the U.S. House and Senate move the Sustainable Growth Rate Act of 2013 forward replacing Medicare's flawed physician payment formula, now represents the best time to act and fix the Medicare QI program making it permanent. This will help nearly half a million low income seniors and adults with disabilities afford access to their physicians.

You can help by contacting your U.S. Senator and Representative to ask them to make the Medicare Qualifying Individual Program permanent.

Older Americans Act Reauthorization Update

In February, the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee which oversees the Older Americans Act (OAA) began hearing testimony to consider reauthorization of this act through 2018. This represents the first significant action by the House since the OAA's last reauthorization in 2011. The OAA funds programs such as in-home supportive services, home delivered and congregate meals, transportation, employment services, and legal services.

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Older Americans Act Reauthorization Update Continued...

H.R. 3850 was introduced by Representatives Chris Gibson (R-NY), Tom Reed (R-NY), and Betty McCollum (D-MN) in January as a prompt for the U.S. House to begin considering reauthorization of the OAA which lags behind the work of the U.S. Senate.

Congressman Tim Walberg representing Washtenaw, Monroe, Jackson, Hillsdale, Lenawee, Eaton, and Branch counties is a member of the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee.

Consider joining the Area Agency on Aging 1-B in asking Congressman Walberg to make reauthorization of the OAA a priority by showing his support for H.R. 3850 to amend the Older Americans Act to authorize funding from 2014 through 2018.

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Or visit his website directly to send an email:
<https://walberg.house.gov/>.

If you do not live in the counties served by Congressman Walberg, consider contacting your U.S. Representative to ask them to show their support for the OAA by signing on as a co-sponsor for H.R. 3850.



For more information on the Older Americans Act, visit the National Council on Aging Website:

<http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/older-americans-act/>

Elder Abuse Legislation in the MI House

In late February, the Michigan House Financial Services Committee held a hearing on three elder abuse bills that died at the end of the last legislative session. House Bills 5030, 5031, and 5032 require banks, credit unions, and savings & loans to inform customers, in writing, about the powers of all the individuals included on a joint bank account. Sponsors Rep. Tom Cochran (D-Mason) and Winnie Brinks (D-Grand Rapids) testified first about the dangers facing older adults who put relatives and friends on their bank accounts, not realizing they can withdraw all of the money without their knowledge or permission. They also pointed out that joint accounts can also be raided by legal judgments against the relatives and friends for debts, child support, etc.

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Committee Chairman Rep. Mike Callton (R-Nashville) commented on the latter point as a compelling argument for acting on the legislation. Testifying for the Michigan Senior Advocates Council was Barb Selesky from Frederic, who urged committee members to approve the bills, even if they don't offer a complete fix to the problem of financial exploitation. Also testifying in support of the bills was Mary Ablan of the Area Agencies on Aging Association of Michigan.

This legislation offers additional financial protections for seniors across Michigan. Contact your Representative to ask for their support.

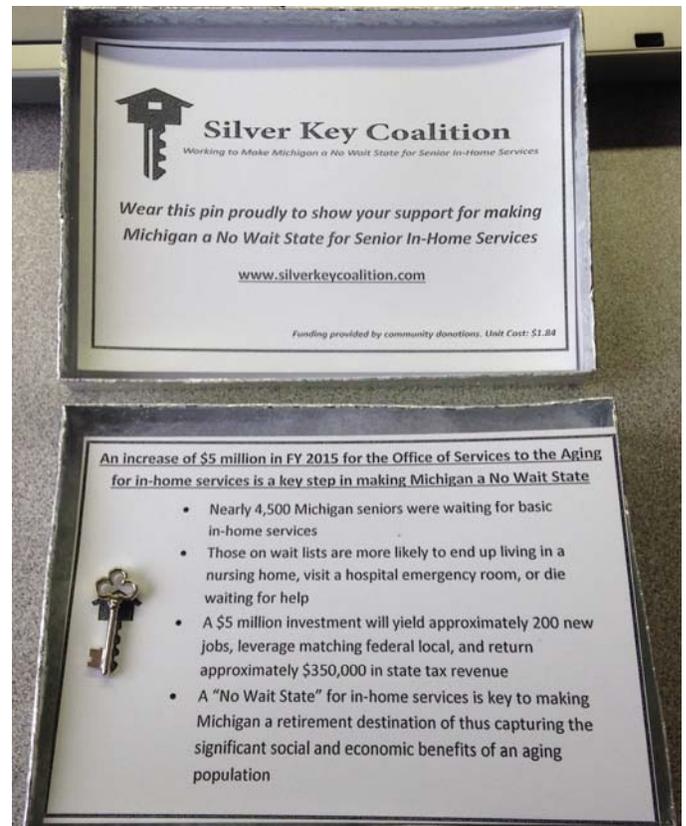
Silver Key Coalition: No Wait State Update

February was a busy month for the Silver Key Coalition (SKC) as both the Michigan House and Senate began appropriations hearings for FY 2015. The SKC, advocating for a \$5 million allocation increase for the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, had a powerful showing of aging service providers, advocates, and older adult service recipients at both the House and Senate public hearings.

In addition to providing testimony regarding the benefits of in-home services to both recipients and to the State, the SKC members have met with key appropriators in both the House and Senate on the Department of Community Health Appropriations Subcommittees to build support for making Michigan a no wait state for senior in-home services. Legislators have been provided with the Silver Key lapel pin pictured to the right and a copy of the coalition's in-home services white paper.

The SKC would like to offer a special thank you to the Macomb County Board of Commissioners who under the lead of Commissioner Toni Mocerri voted to adopt a resolution supporting Governor Snyder's executive budget proposal which calls for making Michigan a no wait state for senior in-home services.

To learn more about the Silver Key Coalition and its goal, visit the website: www.silverkeycoalition.com. Here you can find the coalition's white paper on in-home services and find out ways you can help.



Show your support for making Michigan a no wait state for senior in-home services such as personal care and home delivered meals by visiting our website, <http://silverkeycoalition.com/supporters> where you can add your name to the list of individual or organizational supporters.

Check Off your Support for Alzheimer's Disease in your 2013 State Income Tax Return

New this year, your state income tax forms have the Alzheimer's Association Fund listed as an option to check off on Form 4642 - Voluntary Charitable Contributions Schedule.

This allows Michigan Taxpayers to donate \$5, \$10 or more from their Michigan tax return to the Alzheimer's Association Fund which supports the programs and services provided by the Alzheimer's Association - Michigan Chapters.

This funding supports programs such as a 24/7 helpline, education programs across the state in various settings, and support groups for families and caregivers.



With someone being diagnosed with Alzheimer's every 68 seconds, the work of the Alzheimer's Association is critically important and this funding supports essential programs and services. Take action and check off your support for the Alzheimer's Association on your annual income tax form. Your contribution makes a difference and together we can achieve the Alzheimer's Association's vision of a world without Alzheimer's.

If you have questions about the tax check off, Alzheimer's disease, or the work of the Association, please feel free to call 1-800-272-3900, or email MICheckOff@alz.org.



The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) is a nonprofit agency serving the needs of older adults in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Washtenaw counties.

Contact Ryan Cowmeadow, (248) 262-1282 or by e-mail at rcowmeadow@aaa1b.com to join the Senior Advocacy Network or receive copies of AAA 1-B reports referenced in The Advocate.